Rivulets of blood, flaming bright, ran down to crash in golden breakers. Spock's robe glowed green and blue, stirring without wind; each dry jade bone moved precisely, building the power, the fire-rimmed circle, building unbroken and whole.

Behind Spock's head, Kirk saw tendrils of darkness grow through the stars. Reaching. Waiting.

"Control," Spock whispered. "Control. I am one...." His fingers drew in power. Kirk's back arched weakly. His mouth opened but no sound emerged. No--not--"

Not alone.

"Spock--please--" In the darkness, trembling, he focused on serpent green, rampant and needing. His need. "Spock--"

"One," Spock chanted. "One--" It broke. The power, the surge of knowledge that was almost there, almost real, came tumbling down with the taste of ashes and deadly dissapointment. Spock's shoulders slumped. He knelt beside Kirk, head down.

"So close." There was raw weariness in his voice.

"Spock--" That isn't the way, he wanted to tell him, insight flashing. Control. Power. Take it and run, that isn't-- Not alone.

"Captain," Spock's hand hid his face. "I'm sorry."

"Love me. Please."

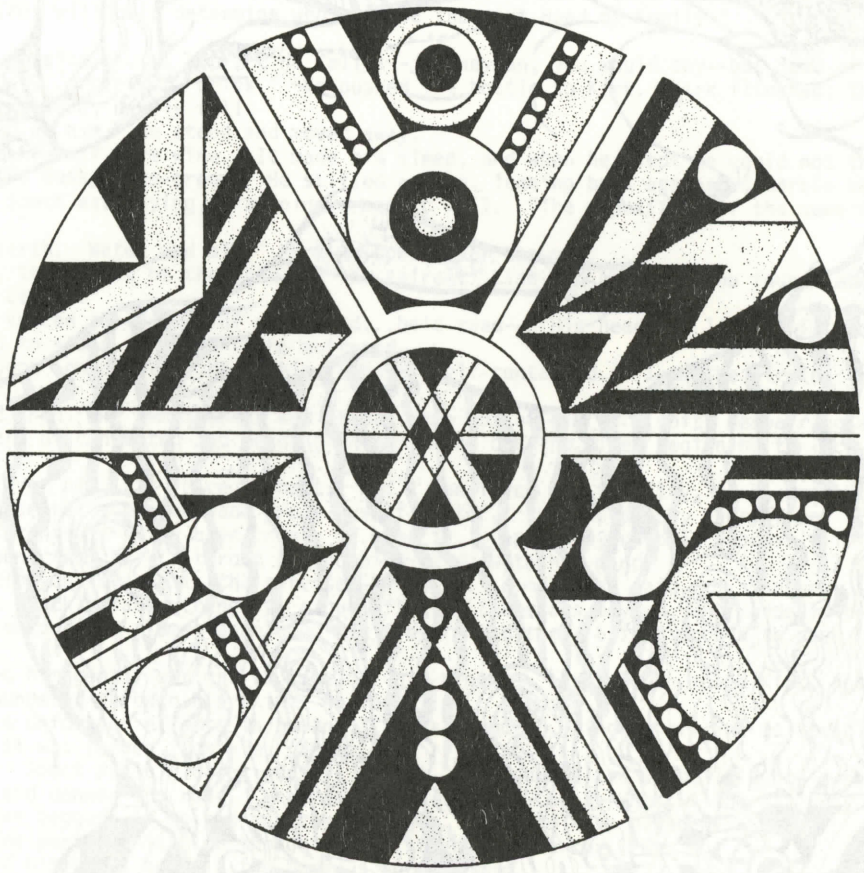
"I am a Vulcan," Spock said steadily. Eyelashes brushed his cheek. Moist? "I don't know how to love."

"Spock--"

"Forget, Captain. Until the next time. Forget."

With the traps waiting in every corner. Runes for some. Symbols of power for another. The enticements, the bait. To set what loose? In what hubris-ridden flight, the rush to set death free.

"Sleep, my firebird." Fingers brushed his eyelids down. "Forget."

Below, the volcano smouldered. Waiting, for the next time.

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